

## How Much Do We Value Jesus?

Matthew 26:1-16

April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Big idea: Mary placed a high value on Jesus as demonstrated through her sacrifice, in contrast to Judas and the leaders of the people.

### Intro

4 scenes, deliberately set in contrast though not necessarily in chronological order

Prediction, plotting, sacrifice, and betrayal

Jesus predicted He will be handed over in 2 days, presumably the scenes of plotting and betrayal happen at the same time. The middle scene of sacrifice we know from other gospel accounts actually happens 4 days earlier. Why does Matthew place it here?

Contrasts two groups of people who do not properly value Jesus with one woman who does; one woman who understands the time and understands who He is, with even more penetrating insight than the disciples in that moment.

Causes us to ask ourselves, how much do we value Jesus? Do we see His worth? What do we place ahead of Him?

#### 1. **Prediction** (26:1-2)

- a. "When Jesus had finished all these words"
  - i. Fifth usage of this phrase, ending the fifth major section of Matthew, now moves into the long conclusion.
- b. Two days before the Passover, places this conversation Tuesday
- c. They would have known the first part (the Passover is coming), they seemed to still be in denial about the second part (crucifixion)
  - i. And yet He has predicted this over and over
  - ii. **Matthew 16:21** From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.
  - iii. **Matthew 17:22-23** And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; <sup>23</sup> and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved.
- d. The chief priests and elders plot and scheme. Judas betrays. The disciples appear unaware of the hour. But it's all still under God's sovereign control. Jesus goes into Jerusalem as a volunteer Passover sacrifice, not a naïve but kind teacher caught up in political affairs that are beyond His control.
- e. Even the timing was in His hands.
  - i. As we'll see in vv. 3-5, the leaders of the people wanted to wait until after the Passover, which would have placed His arrest more than a week out. He said it would happen in two days.
  - ii. In His sovereign planning it would take place during the Passover.
  - iii. It happened at that time so that Jesus would die during Passover, the festival that celebrates God's deliverance of his people. At Passover, a lamb was slain. Its blood symbolically covered

the sins of Israel. Jesus fulfills and deepens the Passover. He is not a symbol, he is the Passover lamb. His blood covers our sins. His resurrection is our life, if we trust in Him. (adapted from Doriani)

- iv. Odonel – In Jesus' own Passover story God's people will be saved when the Lord does not Passover his first-born son.

## 2. **Plotting** (26:3-5)

- a. The scene changes to the court our palace of Caiaphas the high priest where the chief priests and elders of the people are gathered.
  - i. Chief priests and elders together made up the Sanhedrin, the political ruling body over the people underneath the Roman government.
  - ii. The high priest was the top dog in the leadership chain but still underneath their Roman occupiers.
  - iii. His position required political savvy to preserve his power.
  - iv. The high priest was appointed by the Romans, much to the distaste of the Jewish people. The average tenure of a high priest was less than 2 years. Caiaphas served for almost 20 years.
- b. John's account gives more detail to their concerns.
  - i. After Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead, many of the people believed in Him. (John 11:44-45)
  - ii. But the chief priests and Pharisees were concerned.
    - 1. **John 11:46-48** But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them the things which Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. <sup>48</sup> "If we let Him *go on* like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
      - a. Maybe they really were afraid of what the Romans would do to the people. But it seems selfish, at least in part. They are worried about their "place."
    - 2. **John 11:49-50** But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."
      - a. They had a semi-autonomous rule at this point. The very thing they hoped to prevent by killing Jesus came about anyways in AD 70 as the Romans destroyed the temple and Jerusalem.
    - 3. **John 11:51-53** Now he did not say this on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.
      - a. He spoke more than he realized, intending only that it was better to kill one man, even if he is innocent, than to have the nation taken away from them.
  - iii. The chief priests and elders of the people valued Jesus less than their **positions**.
  - iv. Jesus consistently illustrates how power should be used. They show how it should not be used.
    - i. They appear to be interested in self-preservation and their own power and they met secretly.

- ii. Jesus taught openly and served people.
  - iii. Jesus epitomized how Peter told the elders of a church to lead, as surely Peter saw this lived out in Jesus' life for 3 years and then wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit.
    - 1. **1 Peter 5:1-4** Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
      - a. Leaders watch over those under their care.
      - b. Leaders are motivated by God's call not guilt.
      - c. Leaders are eager to serve, not eager to gain.
      - d. Leaders set the tone by their example, not by their commands.
    - 2. Those principles apply to leadership in the home, church, but also in the world of business or education. (adapted from Dan Doriani)
3. **Sacrifice** (26:6-13)
- a. At a home in Bethany, about 1.5 miles from Jerusalem.
    - i. Matthew inserts it here for contrast but gives no definitive time marker. John tells us this actually took place 6 days before the Passover.
  - b. The woman
    - i. Matthew doesn't give her name, John tells us it was Mary.
    - ii. Jesus had a long relationship with the family. In Luke 10:38-42 they fed Jesus and his disciples. Martha got upset because Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet listening and learning from him. Martha was slaving away in the kitchen and wanted Mary to help. Jesus commended Mary for choosing the better option of learning from him.
    - iii. In John 11 Jesus rose Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead
  - c. She poured a vial of costly perfume on Jesus.
    - i. Loaded with cultural and Biblical meaning that could be lost to us.
    - ii. We hear of someone having a bottle of perfume poured on them and we might think of a middle school boy who skipped a shower and attempted to cover up with an overgenerous dosing of cologne.
    - iii. Culturally, scented oil would be given to a guest before a meal to anoint his head. Think of Psalm 23:5 where David talks about the Lord anointing his head with oil.
    - iv. Biblically, this points to the practice of anointing kings or prophets in the OT.
      - 1. Even the word Messiah translated as Christ in the NT literally means anointed.
    - v. The alabaster vial would have been carved from a soft stone. Even the bottle was expensive. She likely broke the narrow neck of the bottle and poured out all the contents on Jesus.

- vi. The perfume, John tells us, was nard and was very expensive. It was made from the roots of a plant found in India that would be crushed and distilled into a strongly scented oil.
  - 1. In John's account it is said to be worth 300 denarii, or about one year's wage.
- d. The disciples were indignant – angry, vexed, displeased, irritated
  - i. The stated reason for their anger is that it should have been sold and the money given to the poor.
    - 1. John tells us that Judas said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he would take what was in it. (John 12:6)
    - 2. Perhaps the others were really concerned about the poor.
- e. Jesus defends the woman
  - i. Her sacrifice recognizes the unique moment in world history.
  - ii. Jesus values caring for the poor. This is not a dismissive comment.
    - 1. Likely reference to Deut. 15:11
    - 2. **Deuteronomy 15:11** "For the poor will never cease *to be* in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'
    - 3. Doesn't mean don't help because they will always be there – freely open your hand
  - iii. Her kind action will be spoken of around the world.
    - 1. Jesus anticipated that this gospel would spread throughout the whole world.
    - 2. He knew His words and actions would be passed on. Death would not be the end of His movement.
    - 3. Even as we study this passage today in a part of the world Jesus' disciples didn't even know existed, it is being fulfilled. It is fulfilled in 1,500 languages that the NT is translated into.
- f. Mary valued Jesus more than personal wealth or freedom from criticism.

#### 4. **Betrayal** (26:14-16)

- a. Judas went to the chief priests and asked what they would give him to betray Jesus.
  - i. This enabled them to arrest him secretly and so, they hoped, avoid the riot they feared.
- b. Why did Judas do it?
  - i. Options proposed include
    - 1. he thought he could put his master in a position to use his power and destroy the opposition
    - 2. he was a violent man looking for ways to get rid of Roman at all cost and he followed Jesus because he thought he would lead that and was disillusioned to learn Jesus was a man of peace,
    - 3. he was disillusioned because he became convinced Jesus was bound to fail,...
  - ii. But these are speculation. The only motive we are given is money.

iii. Luke also tells us that there was a demonic aspect

1. **Luke 22:3-4** And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

c. Judas valued Jesus less than **30 pieces** of silver.

5. How much do you value Jesus?

a. Whitefield's *The Almost Christian*

i. Whitefield was a pastor and evangelist in the 1730's and 40's-... His passion was to communicate to the masses, especially those who were often overlooked. Beginning in English, he would speak to crowds in the fields near coal mines. He had a clear, booming voice designed to carry in the open air. Bruce Shelley in his excellent church history book, *Church History in Plain Language*, described how you could see white gutters made by the tears of his listeners as they ran down their coal covered faces. He then came to the US and spoke from Georgia through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. He spoke in the city of Boston and at Harvard university and then in the countryside in Connecticut and so many people came to hear him it was described like a stream of horses and their riders moving through the countryside. He is estimated to have preached 18,000 sermons to over 10 million listeners. It is estimated that almost every person in the colonies at the time heard him preach.

1. He used vivid language and gestures. For example, in preaching on the inability of human good works to earn salvation, he said, 'Works! works! A man gets to heaven by works! I would as soon think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand.'

ii. Just as another Jonathan Edwards, a contemporary of Whitefield, is most known for his sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Whitefield is most known for his message, *The Almost Christian*. His starting point is actually the passage in Acts we looked at last Sunday where Agrippa says to Paul "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (In the KJV)

1. "An almost Christian, if we consider him in respect to his duty to God, is one that halts between two opinions; that wavers between Christ and the world; that would reconcile God and Mammon, light and darkness, Christ and Belial. It is true, he has an inclination to religion, but then he is very cautious how he goes too far in it: his false heart is always crying out, Spare thyself, do thyself no harm. He prays indeed, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But notwithstanding, he is very partial in his obedience, and fondly hopes that God will not be extreme to mark every thing that he willfully does amiss"

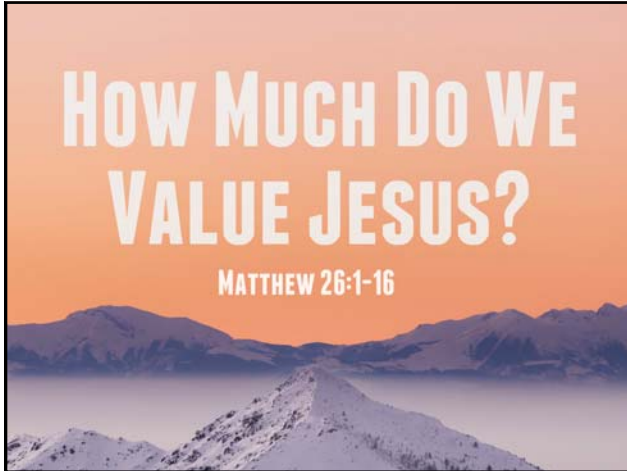
2. "If you consider him in respect to his neighbor, he is one that is strictly just to all; but then this does not proceed from any love to God or regard to man, but only through a principle of self-love: because he knows dishonesty will spoil his reputation, and consequently hinder his thriving in the world."

3. "Let us give to God our whole hearts, and no longer halt between two opinions: if the world be God, let us serve that; if pleasure be a God, let us serve that; but if the Lord be God, let us, O let us serve him alone."

4. Near his conclusion he said, "They choose just so much of religion as will disturb them in their lusts, and follow their lusts so far as to deprive themselves of the comforts of religion. Whereas on the contrary, would they sincerely leave all in affection, and give their hearts wholly to God, they would then (and they cannot till then) experience the

unspeakable pleasure of having a mind at unity with itself, and enjoy such a peace of God, which even in this life passes all understanding, and which they were entire strangers to before.”

- b. Do you value Jesus enough to follow Him in baptism, even if your family is angered?
- c. Do you value Jesus enough to follow Him in obedience, even if it costs you some personal desires?



1

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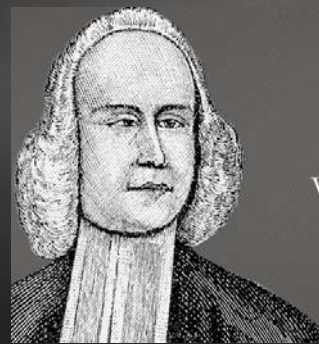
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12